

## **Final Copy: Tuesday November 7, 2006**

### **Statement from the African Civil Society Forum to the 24th Session of UNEP Governing Council/ Global Ministerial Environment Forum**

1. This statement provides recommendations of the African Regional Civil Society Forum meeting held in Nairobi on 26-27 October 2006 to the 24<sup>th</sup> Session of UNEP Governing Council.
2. We, representatives of African Civil Society and Major Groups, recognize and appreciate the GC's and UNEP's willingness and endeavours to integrate and partner with civil society and major stakeholder groups in pursuing sustainable development globally. We particularly hail the establishment and operationalization of the Civil Society and Major Stakeholders Branch at UNEP and the institutionalization of regional and global civil society forums as part of the preparatory activities and processes intended to inform agenda of GC meetings in line with Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration.
3. We also appreciate endeavours being made to make participation of civil society and major stakeholders real and meaningful through their accreditation and acceptance into sessions of GC meetings.
4. The 8<sup>th</sup> UNEP African Civil Society Forum was held from 26<sup>th</sup>- 27<sup>th</sup> October 2006 in Nairobi, Kenya. Participants at this Forum deliberated on the key themes that will be considered during the 24<sup>th</sup> session of the UNEP Governing Council/GMEF and produced the following statement that reflects issues of concern for the African region .the statement includes recommendations to governments, multilateral agencies and regional integration organizations on the four themes of Gender and environment, Chemical Management and SAICM, Globalisation, Ecosystem Services and Human Well-Being and Poverty, and Water and environment.
5. We implore governments and the 24<sup>th</sup> Session of the GC to uphold and build upon these gains and, in particular, to give due regard to the following recommendations of the preparatory African Regional Civil Society Forum meeting held in Nairobi on 26-27 October 2006

### **Making Civil Society and Stakeholders Participation Real**

6. Although the need for and principles of partnership between governments and civil society and other stakeholder groups are now well accepted, mechanisms of engagement are yet to be clearly defined. Civil society and other stakeholder participation remain largely in the form of pre-GC session consultations, reading of statements, side events at major meetings and ad hoc participation in conferences. There is need for UNEP to design a clear strategy on how to engage with civil society and major stakeholders.
7. It is important that governments meaningfully include legitimate representatives of civil society and other stakeholders in official delegations to regional and international meetings. The GC could give guidelines on procedure and principles of selection as well as the proportion of delegates from civil society required for any international meeting.

### **Strengthening Regional and Global Civil Society Forums**

8. The regional and global civil society forums are critical inventions in the effort to incorporate all important stakeholders in shaping UNEP's agenda. It is, however, clear that both the

initiatives require additional financial and human resources to ensure better coordination and greater inclusiveness in order to enhance their legitimacy and impact.

9. The African Civil Society Forum has an established an **Ad hoc Steering Committee** to steer participation of African stakeholders, articulate their sustainable development agenda and promote their partnership with UNEP and other relevant institutions and initiatives. The GC is called upon to recognize and support this initiative as a positive endeavour towards streamlining civil society engagement with UNEP.

10. Unlike the GC, the very critical African Ministerial Conference on Environment (AMCEN) lacks a mechanism for bringing on board views of civil society and major stakeholders. We strongly urge African Governments to recommend and establish GC-like civil society preparatory meetings for AMCEN to provide opportunity for stakeholders to inform its agenda.

#### **A. Gender and Environment**

11. Women play key roles in managing and utilisation of the environment as shown in various UN documents including Agenda 21, The Beijing Conference in 1995, and the African Environment Outlook 2002 (AEO 1 2002)

12. The UN CSD –12 further noted that though women’s active participation in ensuring sustainable development is highly visible, the underlying problems at the policy and implementation levels result from failure to take into account gender specific approaches. e. g cost effective analysis in economic resource investment should take in consideration gender perspective

13. ACS notes with concern that funds are increasingly being channelled through Governments and that gender issues remained a separate issue and was incorporated together with fields such as health and education.

14. The ACS strongly suggest that gender perspective must cut across all operational activities and be integrated into strategies for poverty eradication, macroeconomic development, social protection, agriculture, rural development and peace and security

15. United Nations Decade for Education for Sustainable Development (UN ESD) recognises the need for gender integration in achievements of its objectives to improve quality of education, reorient education to address local needs, create public awareness on sustainability issues and to capacity build trainers in the area of SD.

16. The Bali Strategic Plan For Technology Support and Capacity building provides further guidance for the implementation of the UNEP Water Policy and Strategy. Oftentimes women, especially those from indigenous communities whose culture promotes gender biases and exclusion, have been left out in decision-making processes and policy formulation even though they are the most affected by environmental degradation and are well placed to be part of the solutions.

17. A.C.S commends the post-conflict assessment work of UNEP for example the environmental consideration of human displacement in Liberia, which was viewed from a gender perspective.

18. A.C.S lauds the ongoing work by UNEP's Division of Early Warning and Assessment (DEWA) in developing an "Environment and Conflict Prevention" initiative whose aim is to coordinate and stimulate efforts to promote conflict prevention, peace, and cooperation through activities, policies, and actions related to environmental protection, restoration, and resources. We urge governments to wholly support the continuation of this process. We strongly recommend that gender perspectives be entrenched in this initiative

## **Recommendations**

### **African civil society recommends:**

19. Therefore in the context of the Bali Strategic Plan raising awareness, training and education on gender and environment should be strengthened in the Africa region, both within the formal and non-formal systems of education with special attention paid to women from indigenous communities In particular, Civil Society in Africa support the implementation of the mentorship program for young women and encourage Governments to financially support this program

20. Civil Society support strengthening of research on gender and environment, generating gender disaggregated data including statistics on indigenous women and environment and recommends the creation of a Gender and environment Trust Fund for CS in Africa to facilitate mainstreaming Gender and Environment in implementation of environment programs.

21. A.C.S urges Governments to empower UNEP to take concrete steps and measures including affirmatives actions to bring on board both men and women from all Major Groups in decision-making processes, with a special attention to under-represented groups such as indigenous peoples

22. A.C.S commits to be at the forefront in setting up a women environment network for Africa whose roles will include identifying and sharing best practices on GE as well as existing women groups representatives, We call on governments to empower UNEP to facilitate the set up of the aforementioned women environment network which will then assist in the identification and mobilization of participants from major groups for consultative meetings.

23. A.C. S urges governments and UNEP to recognise women's gender based peculiar roles when assigning them responsibilities and especially in ensuring full participation in all on-going consultations. There is a need to come up with clear policies to ensure gender mainstreaming with active involvement of women and particularly indigenous women in their own situations to participate in the decision-making, management and sustainability of the environment.

24. There is a need to establish and strengthen mechanisms to facilitate equal participation of all stakeholders particularly women at the grass roots and marginalized and indigenous communities and urges governments and UNEP to integrate the issue of protection of women in post-conflict situation in regard to access to land and resources among others by analysing gender specific needs and roles

## **B. Chemical Management and SAICM**

25. The **Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM)** provides a **policy framework for efforts to achieve the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation goal that, by 2020, chemicals are used and produced in ways that minimize significant adverse effects on human health and the environment.** It addresses all relevant sectors, including agriculture,

environment, health, industry and labour, and seeks to mainstream chemical safety as a crosscutting sustainable development issue. The Strategic Approach engages stakeholders from Governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, trade unions and business associations.

26. African civil society greatly welcomes the **adoption of SAICM at the First International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM-I)**, and its endorsement by the various intergovernmental organizations, and expresses its full commitment for the SAICM implementation and monitoring process on the continent.

**27. African civil society is still deeply concerned with regards to the poor management of chemicals and waste on the continent, which has resulted in harm, both to the environment and to public health.**

**28. We realize that one of the causes of poor chemical management in Africa is the weak policy, legal and institutional framework in African countries. Therefore, the African Civil Society is recalling on African governments, with assistance from the international community, including the SAICM Secretariat, to put in place the necessary legal and institutional frameworks on sound chemicals management by enacting appropriate legislation and enforcement mechanisms that embrace core principles as outlined in Agenda 21, including the precautionary principle, the extended producer responsibility, liability and compensation principles, the polluter-pays principles, right to information and the full and inclusive participation of all stakeholders.**

29. African civil society is deeply concerned with the failure of the COP-3 of the Rotterdam Convention on Prior Informed Consent (PIC) for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade to include *Crysotile Asbestos* on the Annex III of the Convention, and also invites all governments, particularly developed countries, to achieve a compromise during the COP-4 scheduled to 2008 for the early and rapid implementation of the decisions;

30. African civil society fully supports the resolution of the fifth session of the International Forum on Chemicals Safety (IFCS-V) calling on synergies and collaborative approaches between the IFCS and the SAICM, so avoiding duplication of efforts and functions in chemicals work;

31. African civil society also supports further synergies and cooperation between the three main conventions (Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal, Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) and the Rotterdam Convention on Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade), as well as welcomes the quick establishment of the Joint Working Group between these three chemicals and waste conventions, following decision by the Basel Convention COP-8 to be held in Nairobi from 27 November to 1 December 2006.

## **B. Recommendations**

### **African civil society recommends:**

32. Advocacy of further political will and engagement from the African governments with regards to SAICM, and increased financial support from the donor countries and development partners to enable SAICM Secretariat perform its responsibilities for early implementation of various recommendations in Africa;

33. Promotion of advocacy, communication and education activities in order to raise public awareness on chemicals issues, particularly on Lead, Cadmium and Mercury; and the promotion of social and public watch to increase community involvement in caring humans settlements;
34. That **SAICM Secretariat** assists civil society networks and non-governmental organizations by providing technical advice, scientific information and financial support;
35. That all those African governments that have not yet nominated National Focal Points for SAICM should do so as soon as possible, preferably before the next International Conference on Chemicals Management scheduled to 2009;
36. **SAICM Secretariat** should make additional efforts to accredit NGO Focal Points at the country and regional levels, alongside the SAICM National and Regional Focal Points nominated by the Governments, so that multi-stakeholder nature of SAICM is promoted and enhanced nationally, regionally and at the international level;
37. **SAICM Secretariat** to evaluate the nomination process of National Focal Points, as it has already caused duplication of work and institutional conflict within national governments in Africa;
38. Capacity building of existing and new governmental and non-governmental institutions and organizations dealing with sound chemicals management;
39. **UNEP and SAICM Secretariat** should provide on-going technical advice and capacity building to the African countries with regard to application of Prior Informed Consent Procedures for certain chemicals, in order to **avoid the recurrence of the recent Côte d' Ivoire's catastrophe;**
40. Promotion of market-based regulations and legislative mechanisms for sound chemicals management in Africa;
41. Assist and support African states with the management of chemical products in accordance of Chap 19 of Agenda 21 on Environmentally Sound Management of Toxic Chemicals, including prevention of Illegal International Traffic in Toxic and Dangerous Products. (AEO 2002 pp 402)
42. **SAICM Secretariat** to ensure multi-stakeholder participation in SAICM activities, including increased participation of non-governmental organizations from Africa in the process;
43. **UNEP and SAICM Secretariat** should support technically and financially the African Union (AU) to convene the long-awaited First Conference of the Parties (COP) for the Bamako Convention on the Ban of the Import into Africa and the Control of Transboundary Movement of Hazardous Waste within Africa;
44. African governments should continue to integrate sound chemicals management into national socio-economic development planning with full participation of all stakeholders;
45. African governments should accelerate their ratification process for those chemicals-related to multilateral environmental agreements, such as the Bamako, Rotterdam, Stockholm and the Basel Conventions;

46. **UNEP and SAICM Secretariat** should continue their efforts in early warning systems, management and environmental assessment mechanisms in Africa with regards to chemicals management;
47. African civil society themselves should continue to promote public-awareness, educational and training tools for sound chemicals management in Africa, with the support of **UNEP, SAICM Secretariats** and governments;
48. Participating Governments of SAICM should empower and enhance technically and financially the SAICM Secretariat in order to implement its mandate and functions;
49. Moral responsibility from the international community, particularly the developed countries, with regards to import of chemicals and waste to developing countries, particularly in those vulnerable regions, such as Africa;
50. Donor countries to continue providing the necessary and additional funds for SAICM implementation so that, by 2020, and in Africa, chemicals are used and produced in ways that minimize significant adverse effects on human health and the environment;

### **C. Water and environment**

#### **Issues**

51. Water is one of the most critical natural resource issues in Africa as exhibited by the following pertinent statistics. More than 1.1 billion people worldwide do not have access safe drinking water and by year 2025 this number will grow to 3.0 billion, 90% of waste water discharged to waterways in developing countries goes untreated and 4 million children die each year from water related diseases. More than 300 million people lack reasonable access to safe water. In sub-Saharan Africa, only 51 percent of the population has access to safe water. 14 countries in Africa are currently subject to water stress or scarcity with those in the Northern Africa facing the worst prospects. 11 more countries will join them in the next 25 years. The rising demand for increasingly scarce water resources is leading to growing concerns about future access to water particularly where water resources are shared between countries.

*(Report of the African CSO's, Consultation on the occasion of the Pan African Implementation and Partnership Conference on Water: PANAFCON 8-12 December 2003 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia)*

52. There is need to recognize that access to water is a basic human right that is essential for achieving gender equality, sustainable development and poverty alleviation and governments are ultimately responsible for the guaranteeing provision in basic needs including adequate water and sanitation to women and their families.

53. Water stress, a direct result of water scarcity, may result in conflict over shared water resources in the continent. The human population, due to an exponential growth rate in water demand, is already in conflict with the natural environment (i.e. ecosystems) over the available freshwater resources. Clean water is often not adequately appreciated, except where access to water resources is limited.

54. Millions in Africa already have no access to potable water. Water scarcity is expected to increase due to increased water demand accompanied by an increase in population in drought-prone areas and possible future decreases in precipitation.

55. Global and regional water resources assessment programmes suffer from a lack of endorsement by governments. There are various reasons, such as a lack of capacity within water ministries, although the existing global comprehensive data sources and associated analyses will be of tremendous benefit to relevant water institutions.

56. There is, however, a growing tendency to form regional networks and partnerships to holistically address issues impacting on the limited water resources.

57. Water security including water safety is a pre requisite for economic growth and poverty reduction in Africa. This requires huge investment beyond the capabilities of most African countries hence the urgent need for institutional strengthening and recognition of transboundary nature of continents water.

58. As human influence on climate is becoming increasingly apparent, water managers must design strategies to cope effectively with today's climate variability to tomorrow's climate change, which is likely to increase water stress already stressed regions. Impacts on climate variability and change on ground water resources should also be considered.

### **Recommendations**

#### **African civil society recommends:**

58. Encourage African countries to participate in the UNEP / GEMS water programme by developing appropriate monitoring techniques/tools supported by the implementation of cost-effective approaches of data collection through training programmes focusing on participation at grassroots level.

59. Promote a global change research programme, in association with regional research facilities, in order to comprehensively address the water cycle and its modification through human interaction to reduce uncertainties in support of adaptive water management and foster stronger collaboration with African scientists and with African policy and decision makers.

60. There is potential for rainwater harvesting as a supplement/alternative for limited (where applicable) local water resources in the continent – it should be promoted and integrated into the mainstream water development agendas of each country. There is need for an investigation on the implementation of rainwater harvesting programmes, including ensuring the quality of the water.

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